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ABSTRACT

Guidelines for establishing and maintaining classroom learning centers are contained in this booklet. The following topics are included: (1) a rationale for creating learning centers; (2) how to orient the children to the new learning center and some important aspects to consider when developing a learning center environment; (3) ways to create instant learning centers; (4) a checklist to assess the readiness of the new learning center; and (5) ideas for learning center activities. Recordkeeping forms for teachers and students and sample student contracts are provided as well as a 20-item bibliography. Two evaluation forms and an accomplishment chart to be completed by the student are included. (JW)

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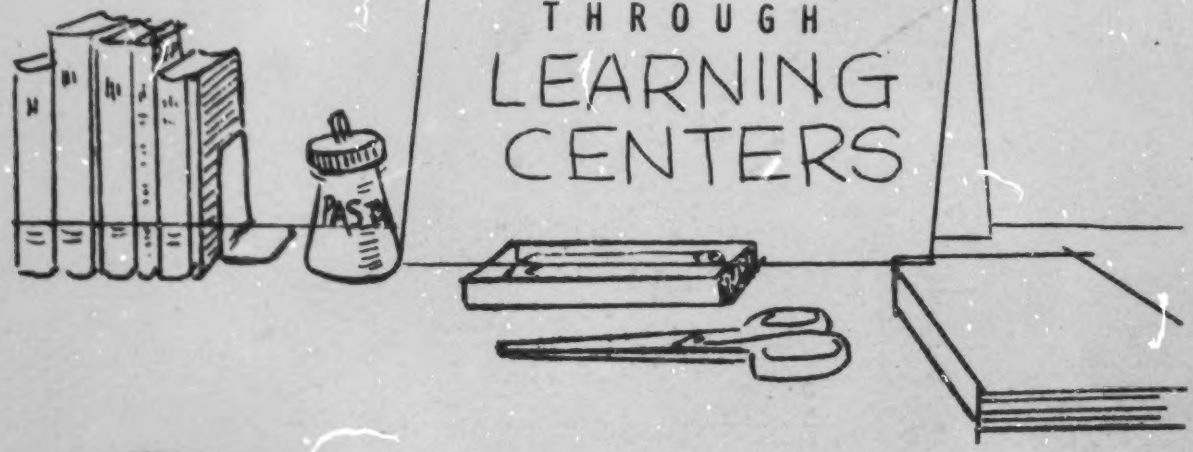
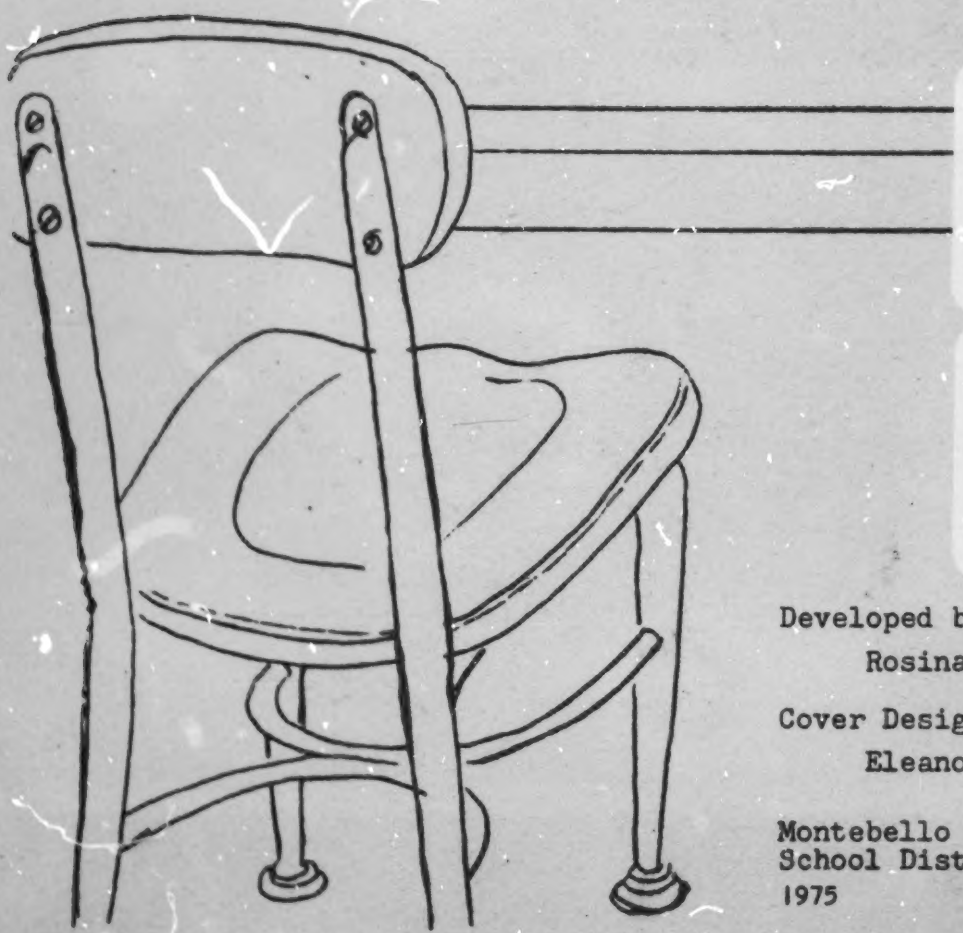
# CREATIVITY

## THROUGH LEARNING CENTERS



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School District
1975

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## INTRODUCTION

Children tell it "like it is" and when we listen we are aware that they can make choices, they can learn from each other, they can assume increasing amounts of responsibility and they can make decisions about the quality of their own learning.

Learning centers provide environments to encourage these responses. They can be "instant" - two desks or tables pushed together for a spontaneous activity. They can be short-term or available for an entire school year. They range from structured (with specific directions) to open (materials and ideas to explore, invent, create).

I appreciate the ideas shared by Lois Tanimoto, Yolanda Woo and Linda Manzo of Colmar Elementary School; Leslie Chenal, Dale Homan and Janice Uyeda of La Merced Intermediate; and Michael Bloomstone, Genevieve Connick, Yvonne Doi, Karen Kaprielian, Leslie Kilts, Richard Koren, Richard Wendt and Frank Shimabukuro of Montebello Intermediate.

Sincere appreciation also goes to Eleanore Bregand of Montebello Intermediate for the cover design.

Rosina Spitzer
EDY Project Director
Montebello Intermediate School

April 1975

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## WHY LEARNING CENTERS?

> ..."It is in fact nothing short of a miracle the modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry; for this delicate little plant, aside from stimulation, stands mainly in need of freedom; without this it goes to wrack and ruin without fail."
>
> - Albert Einstein

Learning centers can "free" the child to think, be curious, to want to become more and more independent, to build up his self-image, to make significant decisions about his learning and to evaluate his own progress. Learning centers also help children grow in responsibility and provide a method of individualizing instruction and humanizing the learning process. Above all, they establish the lifelong process of how to learn.

The teacher must phase himself out of the dependent relationship which has dominated the learning of the child since birth. This means resisting the comfortable temptation to impart knowledge and to have children "do as I say". The teacher becomes a source of accumulated experience, knowledge, insight, maturity, leadership, arbitration, strength, judgment and stability. But the teacher need not be boss, he need not be arbitrary.

A CHILD HAS THE RIGHT TO MAKE IMPORTANT DECISIONS ABOUT HIS LEARNING. THE TEACHER HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF HELPING HIM TO DO THIS.

## THE REAL TEACHER - WHO IS A REAL TEACHER?

A real teacher is on my side.
A real teacher lets me be me and tries to understand what it's like to be me.
A real teacher accepts me whether he likes me or not.
A real teacher doesn't have expectations of me because of what I've been or what he's been.
A real teacher is more interested in how I learn than what I learn.
A real teacher doesn't make me feel anxious and afraid.
A real teacher provides many choices.
A real teacher lets me teach myself even if it takes longer.
A real teacher talks so I can understand what he means to say.
A real teacher can make mistakes and admit them.
A real teacher can show his feelings and let me show mine.
A real teacher wants me to evaluate my own work.

The only teacher who can really do the job is one who somehow feels good about himself, the people he works with, and the world he works in. He has to see himself as basically adequate and truly professional.

WHERE ARE YOU NOW? DO YOU BELIEVE THAT ....

Children are innately curious?
Want to become more and more independent?
Self-confidence is hooked on to learning?
Being a facilitator for learning can be even more satisfying than telling?
Children have the right to make significant decisions about what and how they learn?
If a child is fully involved and enjoying an activity, learning is taking place?
When a child learns something important to him, he'll want to share it with others?
Errors are to be expected and desired for they can lead to more learning?
Student and teacher share in the evaluation of learning?
Children are creative?
Children want to learn?
Children are real human beings?

THROUGH TRUST WE ARE MORE ABLE TO LET GO OF MANY THINGS....SOME OF WHICH MUST BE LET GO.

## LEARNING CENTER IMPLEMENTATION

Plan several days of orientation with the children. Introduce centers gradually, one at a time. Students need to be taught how to use learning centers, such as proper procedure in getting to a center, care of materials at center, clean up, putting work away, evaluating work. A student graduually learns to plan use of time, to work independently, to check his own work. He learns to use schedules in planning his day, to make decisions by having a choice of activities. For many children this provides their first real opportunity to choose time, activities, working partners, pacing and self-evaluation.

## LEARNING CENTER ENVIRONMENT

A learning center may be very brief and simple or an elaborate year-long event. A center can simply be two desks pushed together with one activity on it or a space for ongoing investigation. Tips on materials:

Posters and directions stay durable if laminated.
Plastic sleeves protect papers.
Contact paper is attractive for covering boxes and files.

In setting centers up, consider traffic patterns and small group activity. Spread out as much as possible. If you have a choice of furniture, round tables are ideal and are, along with long tables, preferable to single desks. Couches and pillows are convenient for reading and add informality to the environment. For classroom maintenance, have everything out in the open. Have specified areas for all materials instead of passing out papers, pencils, etc. Students can be taught to be responsible and will take pride in their room, materials and equipment when they are free to use and care for them.

## INSTANT LEARNING CENTERS

One quick way to experience learning centers is to start with one in a very simple way. It can be for whatever time you feel you can "risk" to free the students.

One plan could be:

Place one activity at a table with six chairs.
Put up a sign with directions.
Provide all necessary materials at table.
Tell students they may go to center when a chair is empty.
They can stay there until finished or until you want them to leave.

Give simple rules, such as:

Put all materials and chairs back in place.
Put partially completed or completed work in a designated place.

ARE YOU READY TO BEGIN LEARNING CENTERS? CHECK HERE:

_____Have you decided how many students you will involve at the start?

_____Have you decided how much time per day or week, when, how to free them?

_____Have you provided a space and exactly the number of chairs you want? If it is a center without chairs, do you have enough room?

_____Do you have specific directions at the center telling students what to do, step by step?

_____Do you have all materials labeled in a specified area?

_____Do you have cardboard boxes, shoe boxes, shelves or a specific area where students can store their work?

_____Do you have a form for students to keep their own records?

_____Have you given the students specific, simple directions to follow, such as:

Getting to center in orderly manner.

Putting all materials away.

Leaving center exactly as they found it.

Not using center if it is fully occupied.

Asking you for help when needed.

_____Have you given small groups (about 10 at a time) a walk through the centers to explain them?

_____Have you provided plenty of space for students to display finished work?

Now start with a "class meeting" to explain how to use learning centers. Schedule a "class meeting" afterward to evaluate and work out problems as they arise and get suggestions from students. Be honest - evaluate good things and problems that need solving. Have these meetings regularly.

## IDEAS FOR LEARNING CENTER ACTIVITIES

### AUTHORS AND ILLUSTRATORS

A student can become an author and illustrator by:

- Writing books
- Keeping diaries of events and happenings
- Making scrapbooks
- Taking photographs and describing them in a picture album
- Making a recipe book
- Making a "How To" book on crafts and various skills

### AUTHOR CENTER

At this center you can:

- Be an author
- Pick a picture
- Write or dictate a story
- Draw a picture

Materials: Folders with a picture on the outside; on the inside, words describing the picture.
List of color words, name words, action words
"All About Me" book

### LISTENING CENTER

At this center you can:

- Look and listen
- Draw your favorite part of a story
- Write or dictate your story

Materials: Earphones, paper, pencils, DuKane projector and film

### GROCERY STORE CENTER

At this center you can:

- Choose a clerk
- Make a shopping list
- Find the total amount
- Pay the clerk
- Don't forget the change

Materials: Groceries, a "pretend" store

U.S.A. MAP CENTER

At this center you can:

Take one map of the U.S.A.
Label it with states, capitals, the countries bordering the U.S.A. and major bodies of water
Color or outline the map

Materials: Large bulletin board map, individual maps, markers, crayolas

PLAN A TRIP

At this center you can:

Write a report about a country or state you would like to visit
How much will it cost you? (Plane, hotel and spending money)
What events or places would you like to see?
What type of clothes would you take?
What gifts could you buy there for your friends or relatives?

Materials: Travel folders, maps, pictures, pencils, paper, construction paper

COLLAGE

At this center you can:

Use magazines, scissors and glue to make a collage expressing one of these themes:

Love
Friendship
Hatred
Embarrassment
Greed
Excitement
Happiness

Materials: Magazines, scissors, glue, construction paper

NATURAL RESOURCES

At this center you can:

Choose an interesting natural resource by looking through books
Use an outline map to show where one kind of resource is located
Make a salt and flour map
Do research on how natural resources are used
Make a poster or picture
Create a filmstrip on pollution

Materials: Recipe card for flour and salt map, books, outline maps, pictures

NATIONALITIES

At this center you can:

Make a collage of the nationalities you know about
Learn to say at least three things in a language you do not speak

Materials: Magazines, construction paper, glue, task cards with survival phrases in Spanish, English and at least one other language

Example: Task Card I

Buenos dias -- Good morning --
Buenos noches -- Good night --
Como esta? -- How are you? --

TRAVEL PUZZLE

At this center you can:

Find a picture in a magazine of an airplane, car or other means of travel
Glue it to heavy paper or cardboard
Place under heavy books
When dry, (next day), cut into about five pieces
Find someone who can put it together

Materials: Magazines, glue, cardboard, scissors

SHOPPING CENTER

At this center you can:

Name all the kinds of stores you would build in a shopping center
Use construction paper, glue, scissors and crayons to build a shopping center.

Materials: Construction paper, glue, scissors, crayons

TELEPHONE DIRECTORY

At this center you can:

Make your own "Yellow Pages"
Find businesses that are useful to you and your family
List the name, address and phone number of places you choose
Use the phone directory to answer worksheet questions

Materials: Yellow directories, yellow ditto paper, pencils, crayons, worksheet

TELEPHONE DIRECTORY WORKSHEET

Name _____

Use a phone directory to help you answer the following questions:

How many pet shops are listed in Montebello? _____
in East Los Angeles? _____
Are there any pet shops that advertise unusual pets? _____
How many? _____
Where could you take your dog for a hair cut? Name two places.
1. _____
2. _____
How many animal hospitals are listed in Montebello? _____
in East Los Angeles? _____
Is there a Humane Society in Montebello? _____
Where is the nearest one to where you live? _____
_____

BICYCLES

At this center you can:

Write the name of at least one store that sells bicycles in our city
Write directions for getting there from our school
Find two or more makers of bicycles

Materials: Yellow directory, paper, pencils

CREATE YOUR OWN FILMSTRIP

At this center you can:

Draw or write on blank filmstrip
Write a script about pollution
Pick a record for background music
Present your creation to the class

Materials: 35mm clear film, sharpie felt pens, paper for first draft.
Film and pens available at:
Christy's Film Supply
212 W. Magnolia Blvd.
Burbank CA 91502 (213) 845-1755

IMAGINATION CENTER

At this center you can:

Pretend you are a pilgrim
You are the first newspaper publisher in this country
Design a one page newspaper
Write articles about the pilgrims (facts or make-believe)

Materials: Filmstrips, books, paper, pencils

INDIANS

At this center you can:

Read about Indian dances and do one with a friend
Make a chart of Indian words we use today
Make a model of an Indian village, naming tribe and location

Materials: Indian books, pictures, artifacts, construction paper, tagboard, paints, crayolas. Models can be made with sugar cubes and glue.

INDIANS

At this center you can:

Write a short pla
Have a TV interview show with Indian guests who were alive when the colonists landed. Ask: How did you feel when the white men came? What happened then?

Materials: Filmstrips, books, paper, pencils

INDIANS

At this center you can:

Make a scrapbook of drawings and pictures of several ways Indians dressed
Make a fact booklet on unusual facts about Indians
Make a "True & False" book about Indians of America

Materials: Magazines, pictures, construction paper, paper, pencils

INDIANS

At this center you can:

Make a chart of Indian symbols and what they mean
Make a huge wall map of North American Indian tribes
Make a large chart of how Indians used natural resources

Materials: Paper for mural, tagboard, markers, crayons

ANIMAL WORLD CENTER

At this center you can:

Read all about different pets
Do crossword puzzles
Create your own imaginary pet
Find out how much you know about different breeds of dogs
Add your pet's pictures to "Our Pets" chart
Draw an animal

Materials: Resource books, stapler, glitter, construction paper, marking pens, pictures of animals, sign-up and record-keeping paper

FAIRY TALES

At this center you can:

Read fairy tales
Write your own fairy tales
Do a puzzle
Work a maze
Make a crown

Materials: Fairy tale books, paper, pencils, construction paper, paint, directions for making a crown, task cards in box

Sample task cards

Write a story and draw a picture about:

Three magic wishes
Talking fish with magic powers
A giant who can tell what people think
A very wise king
A wicked queen
A poor girl who marries the prince
A poor man who became very rich

FUTURE SHOCK

At this center you can:

Write about what you will look like in 20 years
How old will you be in 20 years?
Guess what your size will be, your clothes, your hair, and if your face will change at all?
Draw a picture of yourself as you think you will look in 20 years

Materials: Paper, pencils, task cards

Sample task cards

20 years from now, where would you like to live?
Why would you want to live there?
Draw a picture of the type of home you would like to live in 20 years from now
Make a daily schedule of your future life style in 1994

OTHER IDEAS[1]

| | |
|---|---|
| Book Nook | A cozy round rug, comfortable chairs or cushions, and an abundance of books for browsing and reading. |
| Artist's Abode | A collection of art materials, including paint, crayons, paste, chalk, junk brought by students with space for students to create their own masterpiece. |
| Friendship Center | A cozy nook, cranny or corner, designated for friends to use as a retreat for discussion or teamwork in completing tasks...students will help to think of special ways to use this one. |
| Let's Find Out Center | A long table containing reference books, maps, encyclopedias, measuring devices, and lots of cards with questions, problems or situations to find answers for. |
| Construction Center | A carpenter's bench and tools, scrap lumber, nails and screws, and idea and how-to books. |
| Author's Pad Center | A comfortable table (round if possible) and chairs, sharpened pencils, dictionaries, a file of suggestions to trigger creative writing. |
| Act-It-Out Center | Lots of colorful scarves, hats of all kinds, some mustaches and old wigs, and a collection of printed situations for role playing, records to be pantomimed, and stories that can be acted out -- all in a secluded corner where noise won't be disastrous. |
| Brain Bank | A collection of crossword and other puzzles, brain teasers and word games. |
| Read All About It | Newspapers of all kinds, including the local daily paper. |
| Magazine Rack | Current periodicals appropriate to the age and interest level of the students. |

[1]Forte, Pangle, Tupa, Center Stuff For Nooks, 1972, Incentive Publications.

NAME _____ 11

| DATE | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ODAY I NEED TO: | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| . | | | | | |

AND NEXT I WANT TO:

.

2.

3.

4.

TODAY MY WORK MADE ME:

(Rosina Spitzer)

Name _____ Date _____

MY WORK RECORD

| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reading | | | | | |
| Language | | | | | |
| Math | | | | | |
| Social Studies | | | | | |
| Personal and Social Behavior | | | | | |
| Comment to Teacher | | | | | |

(San Diego City Schools)

## STUDENT CONTRACT

Name _____ Week of _____

Directions: Write your assignments in the box provided for each subject area. When you have finished each task, circle the number that best tells how you feel about what you did.

1. I did my very best and feel very good about my work.
2. I did a satisfactory job, but I feel I could have done better.
3. I was unable to complete the work this week and will need more time.

| | |
|---|---|
| Reading | 1 2 3 |
| Math | 1 2 3 |
| Language | 1 2 3 |
| Spelling | 1 2 3 |
| Social Science | 1 2 3 |
| Art | 1 2 3 |
| Special Interest | 1 2 3 |

(San Diego City Schools)

# CONTRACT

I agree to plan and to fulfill the following schedule today:

Name _____

| MODS | TIME | |
|---|---|---|
| | | PLANNING TIME |
| 1 | 12:30 | ↓ |
| 2 | 12:45 | |
| 3 | 1:00 | |
| 4 | 1:15 | |
| 5 | 1:30 | EVALUATION |
| 6 | 1:45 | MATH |

EVALUATION:

(Rosina Spitzer)

LAS VIRGENES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

# CONTRACT FORM

CONTRACTEES: _____

_____

I, _____, promise to complete the following assignment: _____

_____

by _____.
(date)

It is understood that I am responsible for using free time both in and out of school to finish this assignment. It is also understood that it is not necessary for me to work along with other students in my group in the subject area in which I have made a contract.

_____ _____
(Student Signature)

_____
(Teacher Signature)

[redacted]NTE[redacted]O [redacted]KME[redacted]E S[redacted]L

Student _____

Team _____ A.M._____ P.M._____

| E.S.L. Curriculum | Date Started | Date Finished | Oral Pronunciation ✓ = completed | COMMENTS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Orange Study Chart | | | | |
| Calendar Packet | | | | |
| Color Words | | | | |
| Clock | | | | |
| Money Packet | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

These materials helped me _____

I need more help in _____

We should _____

Estas materiales me ayuda _____

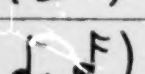
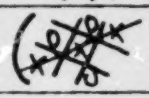
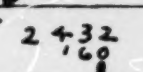
Nesita mas ayudo en _____

Nesitamos mas _____

(Rosina Spitzer and Darline Robles)

| NAME | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| READING : | | | | | |
| READERS, PAGE # | | | | | |
| LIBRARY BOOK | | | | | |
| OTHER : | | | | | |
| MATH : | | | | | |
| WORKBOOK PAGE # | | | | | |
| CENTER | | | | | |
| OTHER : | | | | | |
| LANGUAGE ARTS : | | | | | |
| BOARD SENTENCES | | | | | |
| SHORT STORY | | | | | |
| BOOK WRITING | | | | | |
| OTHER : | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

(Harry Roux
Chula Vista City School District)

| [redacted] | MONDAY | [redacted]ESDAY | W[redacted]NESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SPELLING (c.a.t) | | | | | |
| WRITING ( ) | | | | | |
| READING ( ) | | | | | |
| MUSIC (  ) | | | | | |
| MATH ( 2+2= ) | | | | | |
| ART ( ) | | | | | |
| DRESS-UP ( ) | | | | | |
| GAMES (  ) | | | | | |
| SCIENCE ( ) | | | | | |
| MATH TABLE (  ) | | | | | |
| OTHER ? ? ? | | | | | |
| HOW DID YOU DO TODAY? | | | | | |



(Source Unknown)

BEHAVIOR CONTRACT

Behavior Contract with Alan

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | points | (daily) | Play marbles 10 minutes with a friend |
| 8 | points | (daily) | Go to a.v. 30 minutes |
| 12 | points | (daily) | Help Mrs. Spitzer 30 minutes daily |
| 40 | points | (weekly) | Go out to lunch with one friend |
| 165 | points | (monthly) | A trip somewhere with Mr. & Mrs. Herrick |

THINGS ALAN MUST DO TO GET POINTS

1. Be in your seat on time and ready to work.

   8:55 A.M.
   10:05 A.M.
   12:20 P.M.
   1:20 P.M.

2. Not to bother other students.

**********

I,_____, have discussed this behavior contract with my teachers.
(student's name)
I understand what I must do to get my points.

_____
Teacher Signature

_____
Teacher Signature

_____
Teacher Signature

_____
Teacher Signature

_____
Counselor Signature

(Mary Leach, Maureen Quiroz
and Sheila Herrick)

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Workjobs, Mary Baratta Lorton, 1972, Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., Menlo Park CA

PLANS AND EVALUATION

NAME_____

DATE_____

1. WHAT I PLAN TO DO TODAY:

2. WHAT I ACTUALLY DID TODAY:

3. MY OPINION OF WHAT I DID TODAY AND HOW THE CLASS WORKED IS:



(Lisa Schairer)

EVALUATION OF PAST WORK AND FUTURE NEEDS

NAME_____

DATE_____

1. ON WHAT DID YOU SPEND MOST OF YOUR TIME?

2. ON WHAT DID YOU SPEND LEAST OF YOUR TIME?

3. WHAT DO YOU MOST ENJOY WORKING ON IN BASIC EDUCATION?

4. WHAT DO YOU LEAST ENJOY DOING IN BASIC EDUCATION?

5. WHAT DO YOU FEEL BEST AT DOING IN BASIC EDUCATION?

6. WHAT IS THE MOST DIFFICULT THING FOR YOU TO DO IN BASIC EDUCATION?

7. WHAT AREAS DO YOU THINK YOU ESPECIALLY NEED TO WORK ON IN THE FUTURE?

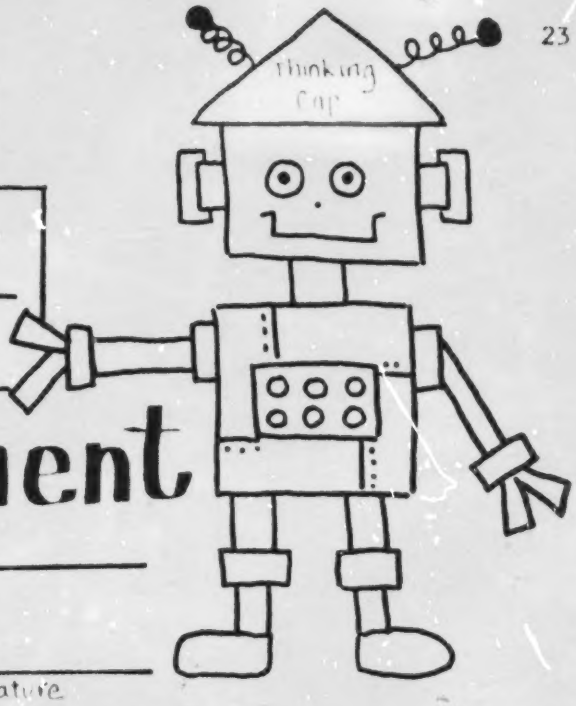
8. WHAT SPECIAL INTERESTS WOULD YOU LIKE TO PURSUE?

9. WRITE A PARAGRAPH EXPLAINING YOUR OPINION OF OUR NEW CLASS SYSTEM.



(Lisa Schairer)

# Mechanical Genius' Accomplishment Sheet




Name _____

Week of _____

Teacher's Signature _____

| Subject | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
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(From It's Positively Fun by Phyllis Kaplan and others. Love Publishing Company, Denver CO 80222.)